**SAKINA BINTAL HUSSAIN (A.S.)**
**By Bashir Rahim**

Recently, at a meeting of the discussion group in Wessex, a question was raised about the identity of the girl who died in the Damascus prison. Was she Ruqayya bintal Hussain (A.S.) or was she, as it is popularly believed to be the case, Sakina bintal Hussain (A.S.) ?

I was referred to the book, published in Iran in 1376 A.H., authored by Shaykh 'Imadudin Hussain Isfahani under his kunya 'Imadzadeh. The book is titled 'Zainab Kubra' and the learned author states categorically that Sakina bintal Hussain survived the prison, grew up to be a poetess and that the girl who died in prison was Ruqayya. The preface to the book is by Marhum Ayatullah Sayyid Abdulhussain Sharf al Din, the well known and respected scholar who wrote Al-Murja'at.

'Imadzadeh seems to rely on two sources, the 21 volume al-Aghani (The Book of Songs) authored by Abul Faraj al-Isfahani (284 - 356 A.H.) and Baladhuri's Ansab al-Ashraf. Abul Faraj is well known for his other major work 'Maqatil ul-Talibeen' recently translated into English and available as the 'Warriors and Martyrs - a short History of the descendants of Abu Talib'.

As I felt that the issue raised about the identity of the girl who died in prison was of some importance I undertook the study of 'Imadzadeh's book and also sought the assistance of my good and learned friend Dr. Liyakatali Takim to help me from his vast knowledge and resources of reference books. Locally I sought the help of an Iraqi friend, Dr. Khalil al-Kadhimi and an Iranian friend brother Hamid Samiy. I am most grateful to these three good friends for their assistance, and particularly to Dr. Takim for his invaluable contribution.

From all the information I have gathered I have reached certain conclusions.
They are, however, no more than tentative inferences drawn from what we have been able to have access to. It is possible that someone may be in a position to cast more light on the subject in which case I shall welcome any input he or she may be able to make.

Sakina is obviously a nick name or a family name not uncommon amongst the Arabs even today. 'Imadzadeh has suggested that her name was

Umaymah, or Aminah or Aaminah. He says that her age at Kerbala was probably 13 to 14 years and tracing it back on the basis of that age, gives the year she was born as 47 A.H. The author also cites the hadith that when Hassan-e-muthannah, the son of Imam Hasan (A.S.) declared to Imam Husain (A.S.) his intention to marry his uncle's daughter Imam Hussain said that he could choose between Fatimah and Sakina, but he (the Imam) would recommend Fatimah as Sakina liked to spend most of her time in the 'ibadah of Allah.

It is a historical fact that Hassan-e-Muthannah and Fatimah bintal Hussain were present at Kerbala and so was their son Abdillah.

It is unanimously admitted by all the historians that Sakina's mother was Bibi Rubab binte Imra'u al-Qays, the Chief of the tribe of Kinda. Maulana Akhtar Rizvi writes in the book entitled 'Imam Hussain - the Saviour of Islam' that one of the elder sisters of Bibi Rubab had been married to Hadhrat Ali and had died before his shahadat.

'Imadzadeh writes that Imra'u al Qays had been a Christian until prior to Bibi Rubab's marriage to Imam Hussain. This somehow does not tally with his elder daughter having been married to Hadhrat Ali and having died prior to his shahadat in 40 A.H.

The preface (muqadaamah) by Marhum Ayatullah Sayyid Abdulhussain Sharf al Din to 'Iamdzadeh's book is in very general terms on the issue of the role of women in Islam and does not deal with either the credentials of the author or the contents of the book.

There appears to be no clear evidence of Bibi Sakina's age at Kerbala. We have the testimony of Humayd ibne Muslim that he had, on Ashura day, after sunset seen a little girl running with her dress on fire. Tabari does not mention the name of Sakina.

Abu Mikhnaf in his Maqtal does mention Sakina, a daughter of Imam Hussain (AS), who was informed that her father had come back form the battlefield. She apparently was very thirsty and went out expecting to see Imam Hussain. Instead she saw the horse alone and she wept bitterly. Her wailing alerted the other ladies who joined in the grief. Abu Mikhnaf does not cite the age of Sakina.

According to Abu Mikhnaf, in Damascus, Yezid had taunted Sakina in the open court about the death of her father. Sakina retorted: "Do not be happy for what you have done! My father was an upright person, Allah called him towards Him and my father responded. As for you, O Yezid, be prepared with your reply in front of Allah"

Abu Mikhnaf adds that one of Yezid's soldiers wanted Sakina for himself, but Bibi Zainab (AS) defended her saying that the daughters of the Prophet could not serve as slaves in people's houses. Umm Kulthum also leapt to her defence.

In Abu Mikhnaf's work, Sakina goes on to relate to Yezid a vision she had of her father in heaven. She was, in this account, even embraced by the Holy Prophet in the vision.

In one part of the vision Sakina meets Bibi Fatimah (AS) and complains to her that she had become an orphan at a young age. Fatimah (AS) also embraces her and weeps. Yezid was unmoved by Sakina's account.

Shaykh Mufid (a.r.) at p.379 of Kitab al-Irshad gives details of the children of Imam Hussain and mentions Sakina (Sukayna) as one of his daughters.

Shaykh Muhammad Mehdi Shams al-Din mentions in his book "The Rising of Hussain" that the poetry written on Kerbala mention that "Sakina is remembered in scenes with her father, Imam al-Hussain, before his death and in a pathetic scene after his death on the battlefield and also in conversation with Shimr". pg. 128

Tabari says that while the prisoners where before Yezid in Damascus, a man asked to purchase a girl from amongst the prisoners. Bibi Zainab objected to this fiercely. Yezid intervened and said that it was upon him to decide. Bibi Zainab said that unless he had ceased to be a Muslim he would not dare sell a girl from the family of the Holy Prophet. When the intended buyer repeated his offer Yezid asked him to keep quiet and go away. Tabari gives the name of this girl as Fatimah binte Ali. Mufid has the same account but gives the name of Fatimah bintal Hussain.

The above illustrates that the historians knew very little about the names or number of the female children Imam Hussain. As they were not writing from the perspective of atrocities committed upon the family members

after Ashura but from the socio-political point of view, they did not delve into it or carry or any in-depth investigation.

There is also the fact that while in all accounts Sakina figures at Kerbala and then Damascus, no mention is made of her as being present in Madina after the prisoners' return there.

That a girl did die in the prison and was buried there is universally accepted. The mausoleum in the prison has a plaque stating that it is of Ruqayya bintal Hussain. Was Sakina's name Ruqayya ? This is likely.

Allamah 'Ali Naqi Naqvi in his Shahid-e-Insaniyyat also mentions Sakina bintal Hussain as a young girl present at Kerbala. None of the historians mention Ruqayya as being a daughter of Imam Hussain. There was a girl called Ruqayya but she was the daughter of Hadhrat Muslim ibne Aqeel.

My, conclusions, which because of the paucity of cogent historical support, must be regarded as tentative are:

1. Sakina bintal Hussain was the daughter of Imam Hussain and was present at Kerbala. She was Hadhrat Ali Asghar's full sister.
2. It is possible that her name was Ruqayya in which case the girl we know as Sakina is the girl who died and lies buried in the prison cell.
3. As for the lady who was a poetess and called Sakina bintal Hussain and who died at the ripe old age of 75-80 there is no authentic evidence linking her to the tragedy of Kerbala. This is most unusual in the Arabian culture of poetry if that lady was Imam Hussain's daughter and a poet. Also, from all the accounts we have of Sakina's piety and devotion to Allah and of her great sufferings it seems hardly likely that she would grow up to be a composer of non-religious poems. One is, therefore, tempted to dismiss this poetess as a figment of the 'Umayyad fertile imagination or, at best, a case of mistaken identity.

In any case why would this lady, if she were the daughter of Imam Hussain, take up residence in Damascus when her brother, our 4th Imam was in Madina ? Why do we not get any account of a meeting between her and our fifth or sixth Imam ?
Also given the affinity that Sakina had with her father, it seems impossible that she would lead a life of comfort as a poetess in Damascus, the very city where she suffered so much. Even as a young girl the

historical evidence available to us clearly projects her as a very upright, pious and committed young lady.

As for Sakina's age at Kerbala this will always remain a mystery, but if we accept that Sakina and Ruqayya are the one and same person then she could not have been much older than seven or eight.

Lastly, I would like to refer to the book entitled Tears and Tribute written by Zakir and recently redistributed by the World Federation. The author has relied mostly on the accounts given in Allamah Majlisi's Biharul Anwar and Shaykh Sudooq's Amaali. In his introduction to the book El-Hajj Mulla Asgharali M. M. Jaffer writes:
The following pages , written by Zakir, give a detailed treatment to the tragedy of Kerbala, where Hussain and his handful companions were mercilessly slain.

In this book, pages 106-107, the author gives the moving account of Bibi Sakina's death in the prison. How she had seen her father in a dream, how she woke up in the dead of the night shrieking, how when she narrated her dream all started wailing, how Yezid ordered for Imam Hussain's head to be taken to the prison. How the girl rested her cheek against on her father's cheek and how she sobbed and then lay motionless !